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REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 1-2 are cancelled, and claims 3, 6, 9, 11 and 13 are amended. Claims 4-5, 7-8, 10, 12 and 14 remain in the application. Thus, claims 3-14 are active in the application. Reexamination and reconsideration of the application are respectfully requested.

The Applicants thank the Examiner for kindly indicating, in item 7 on page 9 of the Office Action, that claims 3-5 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claim 3 has been rewritten in independent form to include all the limitations of claims 1-2 as presented in the June 22, 2006 Amendment.

The Applicants would like to point out that minor editorial revisions have been made to the limitations of claim 1 in amended claim 3 so as to clarify the features of the second magnet portion in view of the combination of claims 1 and 2.

Claim 1 recited that the ball portion is magnetically coupleable in directions of a first axis and a second axis, where the first and second axes intersect with each other at the center of the ball portion and are orthogonal to each other. Claim 1 also defined the trackball as comprising a first magnet portion for stabilizing the ball portion at predetermined rotation angles by magnetically coupling to the ball portion in one of the axial directions (i.e., one of the directions of the first axis and the second axis). Further, claim 1 defined the trackball as comprising a second magnet portion for attracting the ball portion in a direction orthogonal to a rotation axis of the ball portion, by magnetically coupling to the ball portion in the other one of the axial directions (i.e., the other one of the directions of the first axis and the second axis).

Accordingly, the axial directions recited in the first and second magnet portions of claim 1 were defined with reference to the axial directions of the first axis and the second axis.

Claim 2, however, further recited that the ball portion is magnetically coupleable in a direction of a third axis intersecting with the first and second axes at the center of the ball portion and orthogonal to the first and second axes.

Having rewritten claim 3 in independent form to include the limitations of cancelled claims 1 and 2, claim 3 recites that the ball portion is magnetically coupleable

in directions of a first axis, a second axis, and a third axis, where the first, second and third axes intersect with each other at the center of the ball portion and are orthogonal to each other.

Because claim 3 additionally recites a direction of a third axis, as recited in cancelled claim 2, in addition to the directions of the first and second axes, as recited in claim 1, the recitation of the second magnet portion in claim 3 has been amended to clarify the axial direction in which the ball portion is magnetically coupled, in view of the additional recitation of the direction of the third axis.

Amended claim 3 recites that the first magnet portion allows each of any two axes among the first to third axes which are present on the same plane to serve as a rotation axis of the ball portion, identical to claim 2. However, because of the additional recitation of the third axis in amended claim 3, the phrase "in the other one of the axial directions" in claim 1 has been replaced with "in an axial direction of one axis which is not present in the same plane and which is other than the any two axes among the first to third axes." This revision was made because the recitation of "one of the axial directions" and "the other one of the axial directions" pertains to the situation where only two axial directions are recited.

Accordingly, the above-described revision to claim 3 merely clarifies the recitation of the second magnet portion in view of the recitation of the directions of the first, second and third axes in amended claim 3, and does not broaden or narrow the scope of protection of claim 3. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully submit that no new issues have been presented that would prevent entry of the amendments to claim 3 in response to the final Office Action. Consequently, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner enter the amendments to claim 3 in response to the final Office Action.

In view of the Examiner's assertion that claim 3 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of claims 1 and 2, and in view of the clarifying amendments made to claim 3 due to the combination of claims 1 and 2, the Applicants respectfully submit that claim 3, as well as claims 4-12 which depend therefrom, are clearly in condition for allowance.

Claim 13 is directed to an in-vehicle device controller comprising the trackball of claim 1. Claim 13 has been amended to include the limitations of claims 2 and 3, in

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addition to the trackball as recited in claim 1. Accordingly, claim 13 recites an in-vehicle device controller which comprises the trackball as defined in amended claim 3.

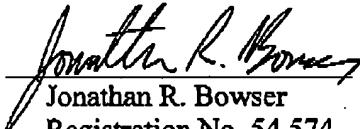
Since the in-vehicle device controller of claim 13 comprises the trackball as defined in amended claim 3, and in view of the Examiner's assertion that the trackball of claim 3 would be allowable if rewritten to include all the limitations of the trackball recited in claims 1 and 2, the Applicants respectfully submit that claim 13, as well as claim 14 which depends therefrom, is also clearly in condition for allowance.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. An early notice thereof is respectfully solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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